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AREA 88

by KAORU SHINTANI

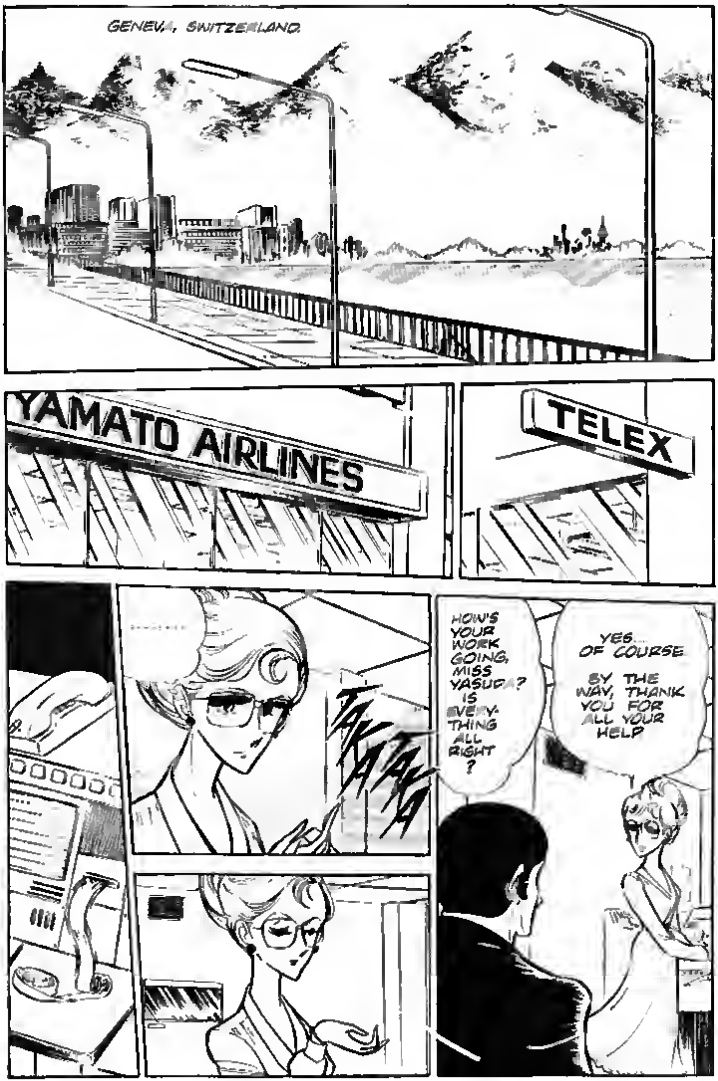
22

BIWEEKLY

Miss Yasuda Receives A Strange Proposal, And Ryoko Reminisces About Her First Meeting With Shin.

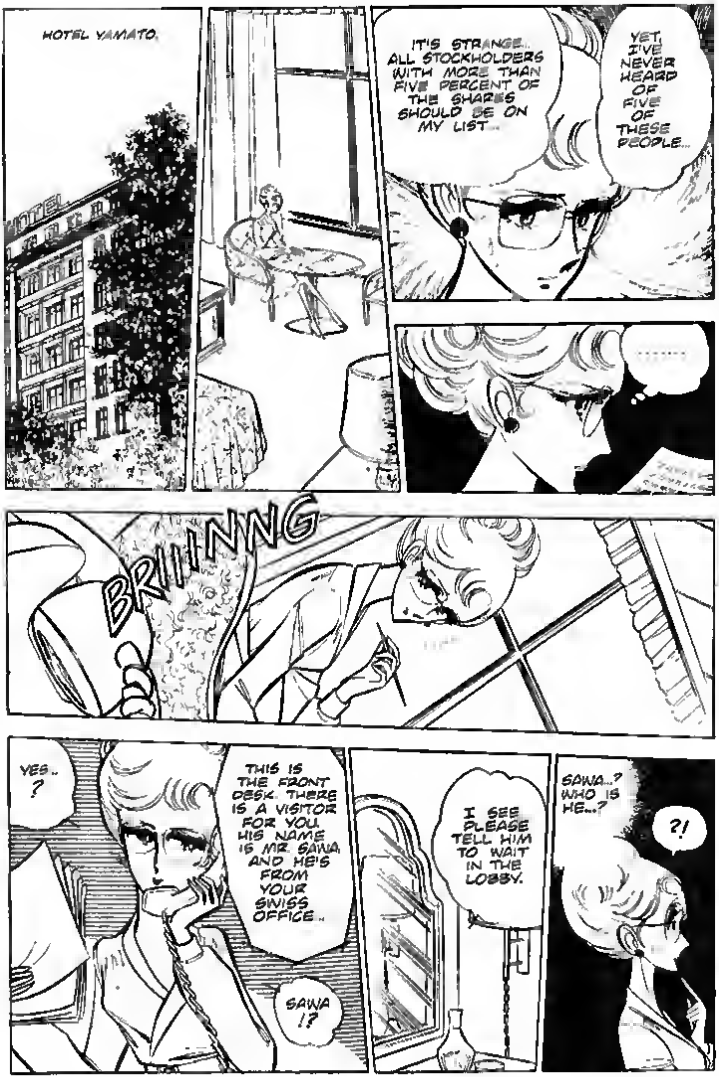
VIZ COMICS

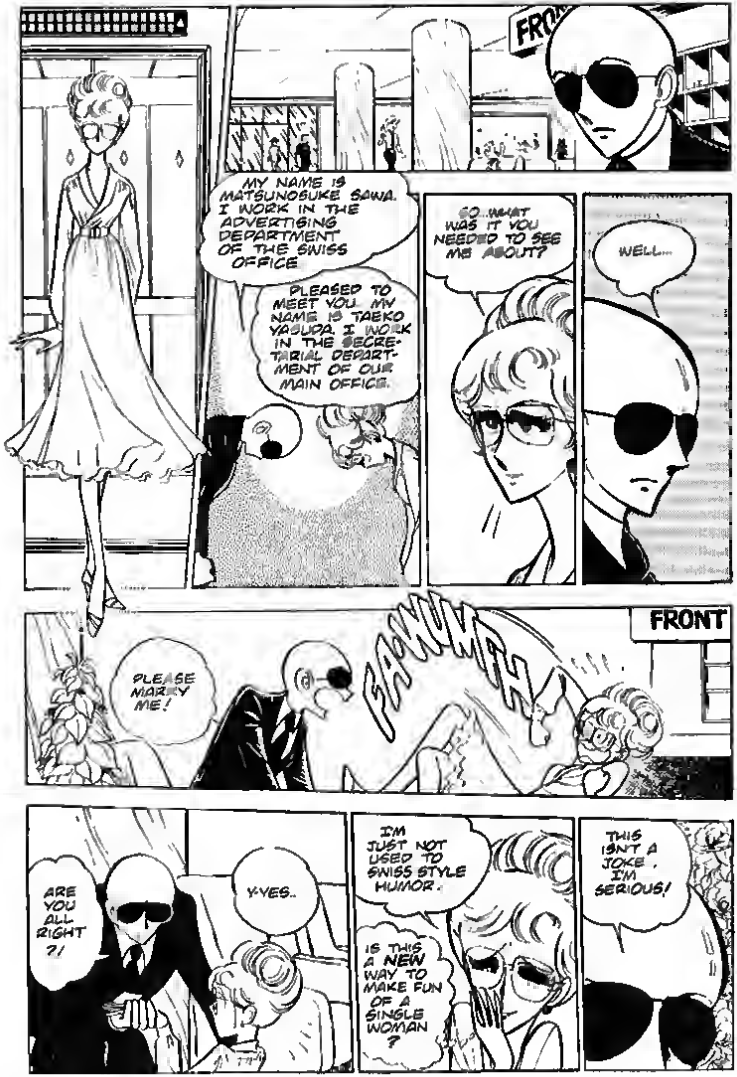
MISSION 22:
CLINGING TO LIFE

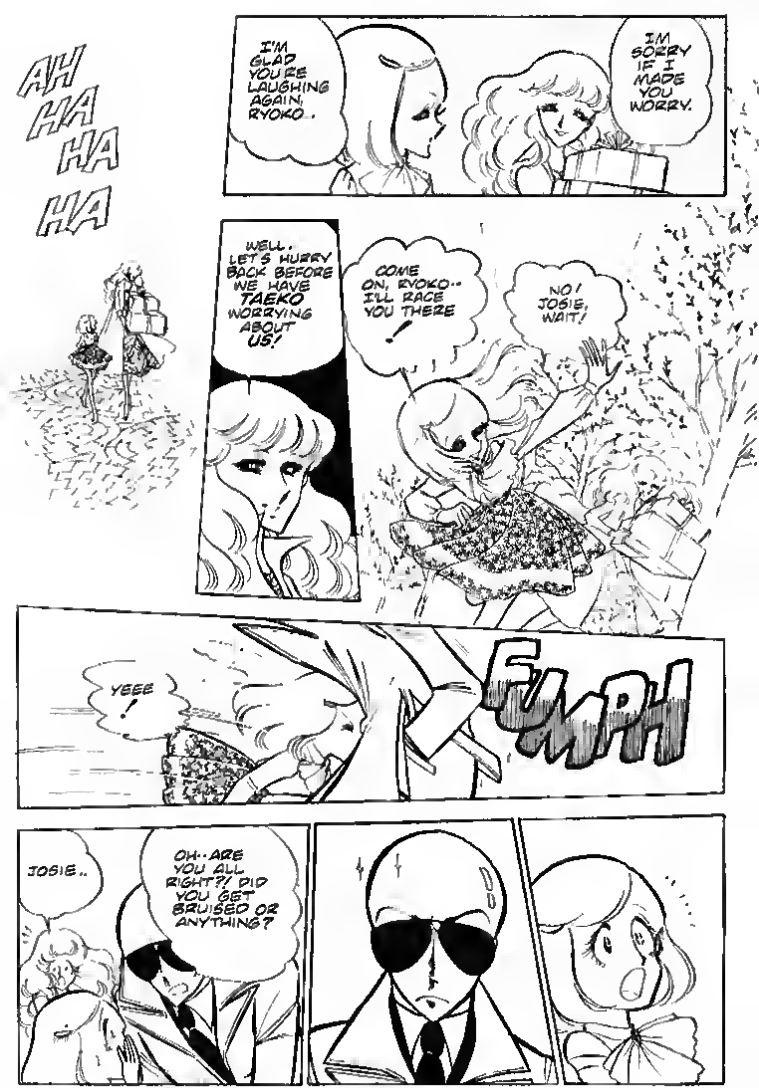

GENEVA, SWITZERLAND.
YAMATO AIRLINES
TELEX
TAKATAKA
HOW'S YOUR WORK GOING, MISS YASUDA? IS EVERYTHING ALL RIGHT?
YES... OF COURSE. BY THE WAY, THANK YOU FOR ALL YOUR HELP

I HEARD THAT MISS TSUGUMO HAD A LITTLE TROUBLE IN ROME
WELL, YES
I IMAGINE IT MUST BE QUITE A JOB TAKING CARE OF HER
SHE'S 20 YEARS OLD ALREADY, AND THERE'S NOTHING WRONG WITH HER YOU'D THINK THAT SHE'D MARRY SOMEONE SOON.
OH, YOU WOULD, WOULD YOU. ?!
WELL, I HAPPEN TO BE 28 YEARS OLD! THERE'S NOTHING THE MATTER WITH ME, EITHER, AND I'M STILL SINGLE!
AH, HEH, HEH. I DIDN'T MEAN TO IMPLY..
HA, HA.. WELL, DON'T MIND ME. I GUESS IT'S A SORE SUBJECT
AHEM. I HAVE TO GO BACK TO THE HOTEL AND ORGANIZE SOME TAPED MESSAGES. GOODBYE..
YES. SEE YOU SOME OTHER TIME.
SHE'S BEAUTIFUL. BUT SHE'S TOUGH, ISN'T SHE?
YEAH.. SHE MAY NOT LOOK LIKE IT, BUT SHE'S THE CHIEF SECRETARY OF OUR MAIN OFFICE..
SHE'S A VERY CAPABLE WOMAN.

SHE WOULD PROBABLY MAKE A VERY GOOD WIFE... DON'T YOU THINK ?
PROBABLY... BUT THERE'S ONE THING THAT HOLDS MOST MEN BACK.
SHE IS SO CAPABLE THAT SHE'S INTIMIDATING. NO ORDINARY MAN COULD HANDLE HER.
HMMMM... NO ORDINARY MAN..
WHAT'S THIS...? ARE YOU ATTRACTED TO HER ?
YES! WHY... IT'S LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT!
YEAH! I'LL MARRY THAT WOMAN NO MATTER WHAT!
SAWA, SHE IS TWO YEARS OLDER THAN YOU, AND I TOLD YOU THAT AN ORDINARY MAN COULDN'T--
I'M NOT AN ORDINARY MAN! I HAVE THE PASSION OF TWENTY MEN!
YOU MUST'VE HEARD THAT OLD SAYING, "FIND YOURSELF AN OLDER BRIDE, EVEN IF YOU MUST SEARCH THE WHOLE WORLD OVER."
I'VE DECIDED I MUST MARRY HER!
WHAT'S THE PHONE NUMBER OF HER HOTEL ?
WHY'D WE HAVE TO GET THIS GUY AT THE SWISS OFFICE...?


HOTEL YAMATO
HOTEL
IT'S STRANGE. ALL STOCKHOLDERS WITH MORE THAN FIVE PERCENT OF THE SHARES SHOULD BE ON MY LIST...
YET, I'VE NEVER HEARD OF FIVE OF THESE PEOPLE...
.....
BRIIINNG
YES.. ?
THIS IS THE FRONT DESK. THERE IS A VISITOR FOR YOU. HIS NAME IS MR. SAWA AND HE'S FROM YOUR SWISS OFFICE..
SAWA !?
I SEE. PLEASE TELL HIM TO WAIT IN THE LOBBY.
SAWA..? WHO IS HE..?
?!

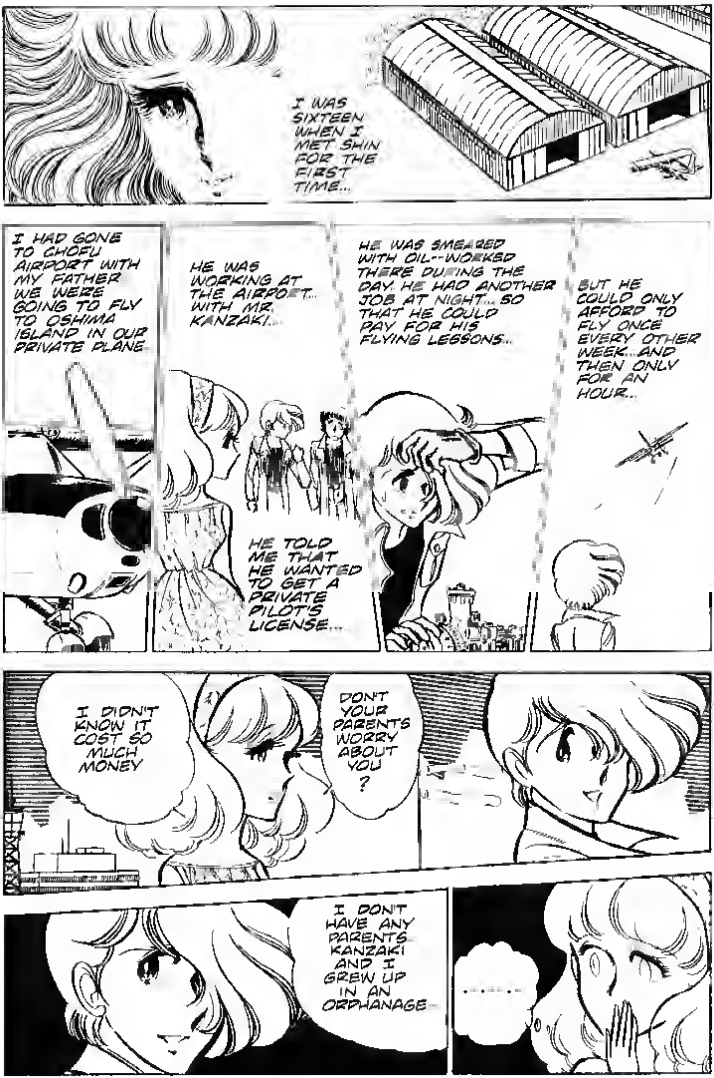

MY NAME IS MATSUNOSUKE SAWA. I WORK IN THE ADVERTISING DEPARTMENT OF THE SWISS OFFICE.
PLEASED TO MEET YOU. MY NAME IS TAEKO YASUDA. I WORK IN THE SECRETARIAL DEPARTMENT OF OUR MAIN OFFICE.
SO...WHAT WAS IT YOU NEEDED TO SEE ME ABOUT?
WELL...
FRONT
PLEASE MARRY ME!
BANG
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?!
Y-YES..
I'M JUST NOT USED TO SWISS STYLE HUMOR.
IS THIS A NEW WAY TO MAKE FUN OF A SINGLE WOMAN?
THIS ISN'T A JOKE. I'M SERIOUS!

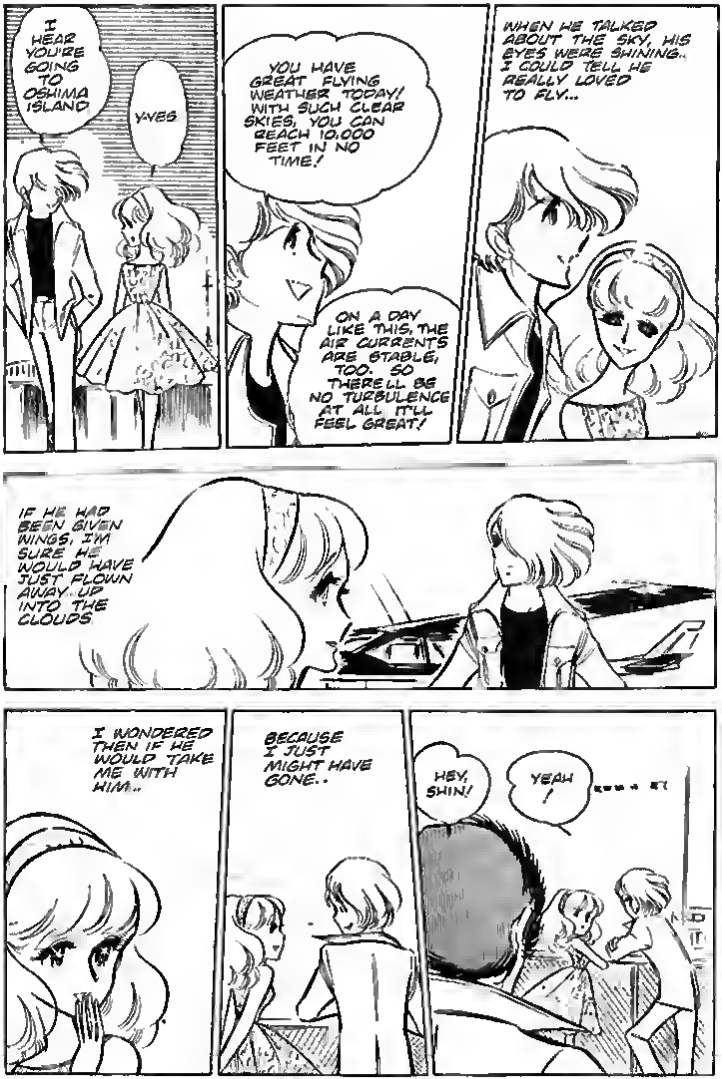

AH HA HA HA
I'M GLAD YOU'RE LAUGHING AGAIN, RYOKO.
I'M SORRY IF I MADE YOU WORRY.
WELL, LET'S HURRY BACK BEFORE WE HAVE TAEKO WORRYING ABOUT US!
COME ON, RYOKO.. I'LL RACE YOU THERE!
NO! JOSIE, WAIT!
YEEE!
FUMPH
JOSIE..
OH.. ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?! DID YOU GET BRUISED OR ANYTHING?

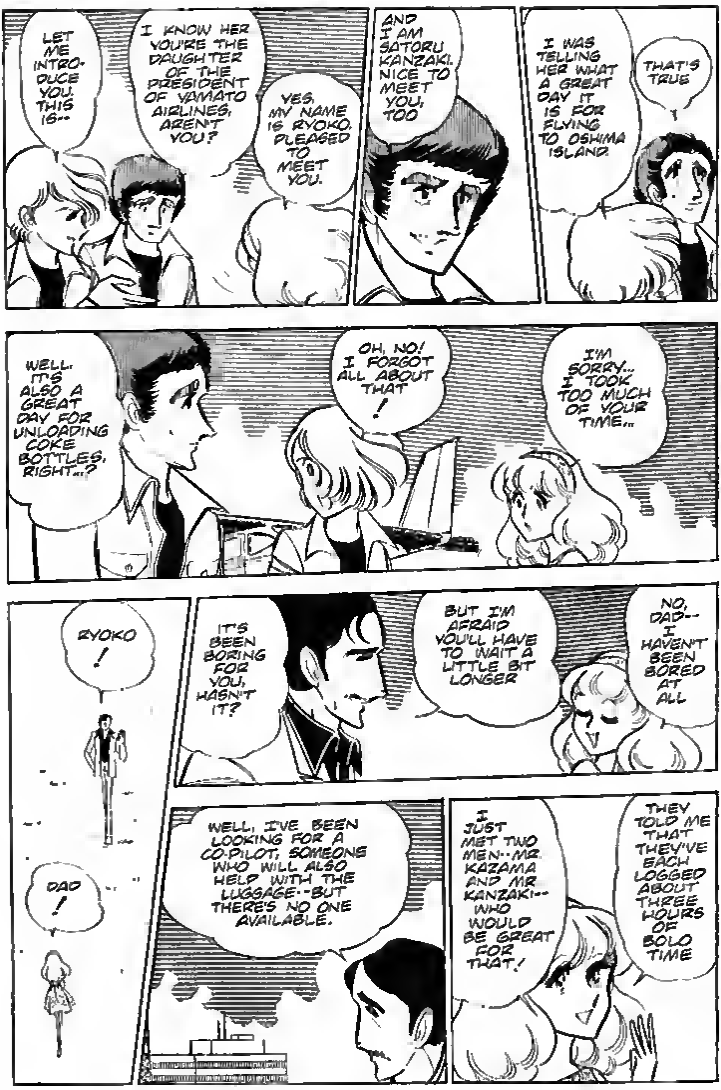
I'M TERRIBLY SORRY
NO, I WASN'T LOOKING, EITHER
RYOKO.. HE HAD A SLAP MARK !
HIS FACE WAS ALL RED !
DON'T SAY SUCH A THING!
WE'RE BACK!
TAEKO, WE'RE BACK!
HUH?! WHERE'S TAEKO ?!
TAEKO, WHERE ARE YOU ?!
DON'T COME IN!
OH, YOU'RE IN THE BEDROOM !
WHAT'S THE MATTER?! WHY ARE THE LIGHTS OUT?
NO.. DON'T TURN THEM ON!

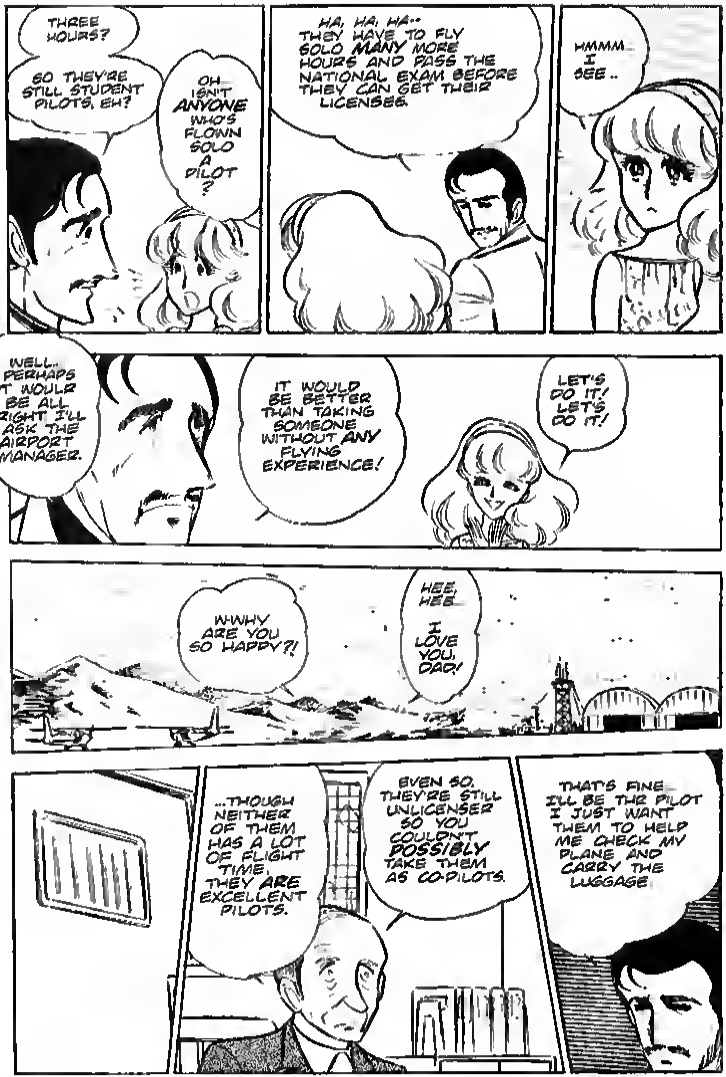
WHY?! WHAT HAPPENED ?!
IF YOU DON'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT, THAT'S OKAY BUT IS THERE ANYTHING I CAN DO FOR YOU?
RYOKO
WAH HUH HUH
WAH HUH HUH
.....
RYOKO DO I LOOK THAT DESPERATE ?
DESPERATE ? I DON'T UNDERSTAND
WHAT DO YOU MEAN ?
I MEAN SEXUALLY FRUSTRATED NEEDING A MAN
OH
.....

I SEE. THAT'S WHAT'S HAPPENED TO YOU...
IT'S BEYOND GOOD TASTE TO MAKE FUN OF SOMEONE THAT WAY!
PROPOSING TO A PERSON YOU DON'T EVEN KNOW!
TAEKO... DID YOU SLAP HIS FACE ?!
YES! HOW DID YOU KNOW? I SLAPPED HIM AS HARD AS I COULD MY HAND STILL HURTS.
IT WAS THAT MAN WE SAW.
BUT, TAEKO., IT'S HARD TO FIND A MAN WHO'S SO SURE OF WHAT HE WANTS, ISN'T IT?
HE'S TWO YEARS YOUNGER THAN I AM..
HE SAID IT WAS LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT RIDICULOUS .
I FELL IN LOVE WITH SHIN AT FIRST SIGHT!
WELL...I GUESS IT WAS LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT..BECAUSE THE MOMENT I MET HIM, I DECIDED I WAS GOING TO MARRY HIM..
RYOKO..

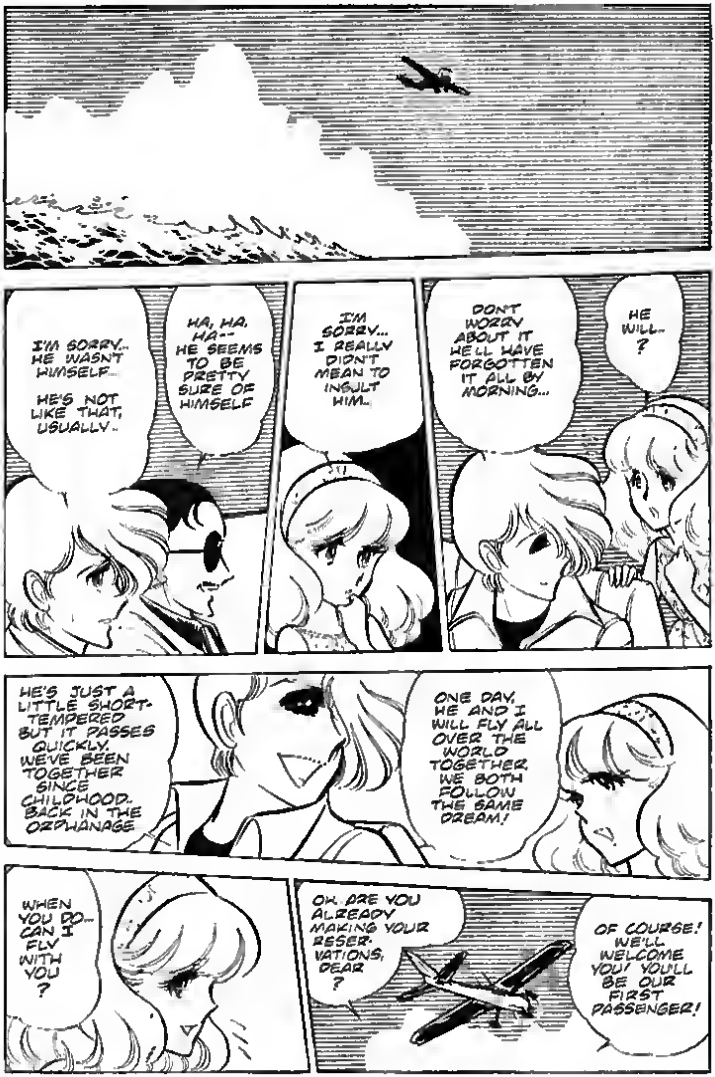

I WAS SIXTEEN WHEN I MET SHIN FOR THE FIRST TIME...
I HAD GONE TO CHOFU AIRPORT WITH MY FATHER WE WERE GOING TO FLY TO OSHIMA ISLAND IN OUR PRIVATE PLANE
HE WAS WORKING AT THE AIRPORT... WITH MR. KANZAKI...
HE WAS SMEARED WITH OIL--WORKED THERE DURING THE DAY. HE HAD ANOTHER JOB AT NIGHT... SO THAT HE COULD PAY FOR HIS FLYING LESSONS...
BUT HE COULD ONLY AFFORD TO FLY ONCE EVERY OTHER WEEK.. AND THEN ONLY FOR AN HOUR...
HE TOLD ME THAT HE WANTED TO GET A PRIVATE PILOT'S LICENSE...
I DIDN'T KNOW IT COST SO MUCH MONEY
DON'T YOUR PARENTS WORRY ABOUT YOU ?
I DON'T HAVE ANY PARENTS KANZAKI AND I GREW UP IN AN ORPHANAGE
.....

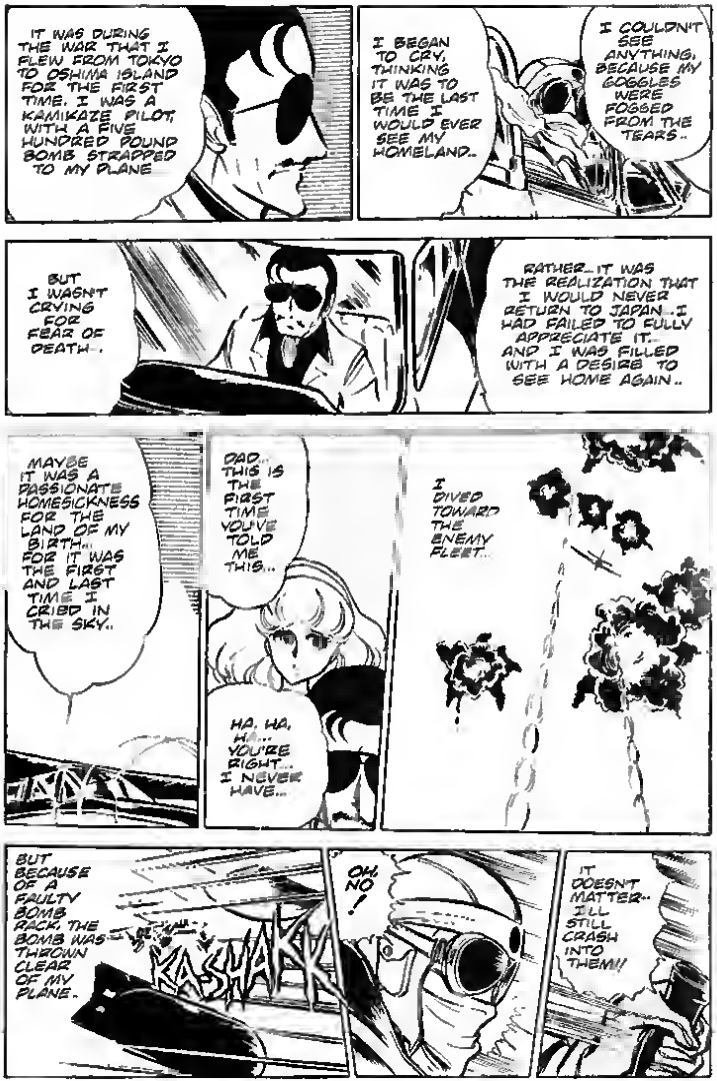

I HEAR YOU'RE GOING TO OSHIMA ISLAND
YYES
YOU HAVE GREAT FLYING WEATHER TODAY! WITH SUCH CLEAR SKIES, YOU CAN REACH 10,000 FEET IN NO TIME!
ON A DAY LIKE THIS, THE AIR CURRENTS ARE STABLE, TOO. SO THERE'LL BE NO TURBULENCE AT ALL IT'LL FEEL GREAT!
WHEN WE TALKED ABOUT THE SKY, HIS EYES WERE SHINING.. I COULD TELL HE REALLY LOVED TO FLY...
IF HE HAD BEEN GIVEN WINGS, I'M SURE HE WOULD HAVE JUST FLOWN AWAY..UP INTO THE CLOUDS
I WONDERED THEN IF HE WOULD TAKE ME WITH HIM..
BECAUSE I JUST MIGHT HAVE GONE..
HEY, SHIN!
YEAH !

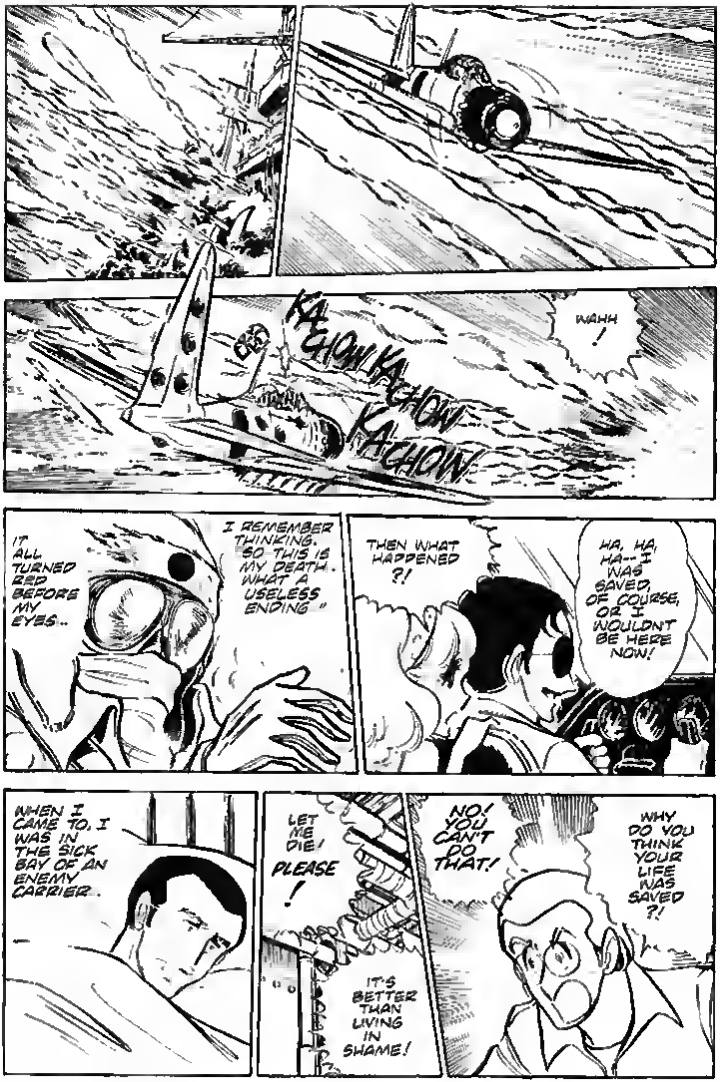

LET ME INTRODUCE YOU. THIS IS--
I KNOW HER YOU'RE THE DAUGHTER OF THE PRESIDENT OF YAMATO AIRLINES, AREN'T YOU?
YES, MY NAME IS RYOKO. PLEASED TO MEET YOU.
AND I AM SATORU KANZAKI. NICE TO MEET YOU, TOO
I WAS TELLING HER WHAT A GREAT DAY IT IS FOR FLYING TO OSHIMA ISLAND.
THAT'S TRUE
WELL. IT'S ALSO A GREAT DAY FOR UNLOADING COKE BOTTLES, RIGHT...?
OH, NO! I FORGOT ALL ABOUT THAT!
I'M SORRY... I TOOK TOO MUCH OF YOUR TIME...
RYOKO!
IT'S BEEN BORING FOR YOU, HASN'T IT?
BUT I'M AFRAID YOU'LL HAVE TO WAIT A LITTLE BIT LONGER
NO, DAD-- I HAVEN'T BEEN BORED AT ALL
DAD!
WELL, I'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR A CO-PILOT, SOMEONE WHO WILL ALSO HELP WITH THE LUGGAGE--BUT THERE'S NO ONE AVAILABLE.
I JUST MET TWO MEN--MR. KAZAMA AND MR. KANZAKI-- WHO WOULD BE GREAT FOR THAT!
THEY TOLD ME THAT THEY'VE EACH LOGGED ABOUT THREE HOURS OF SOLO TIME


THREE HOURS?
SO THEY'RE STILL STUDENT PILOTS, EH?
OH, ISN'T ANYONE WHO'S FLOWN SOLO A PILOT?
HA, HA, HA.. THEY HAVE TO FLY SOLO MANY MORE HOURS AND PASS THE NATIONAL EXAM BEFORE THEY CAN GET THEIR LICENSES.
WMMM... I SEE..
WELL... PERHAPS IT WOULD BE ALL RIGHT I'LL ASK THE AIRPORT MANAGER.
IT WOULD BE BETTER THAN TAKING SOMEONE WITHOUT ANY FLYING EXPERIENCE!
LET'S DO IT! LET'S DO IT!
W-WHY ARE YOU SO HAPPY?!
HEE, HEE... I LOVE YOU, DAD!
...THOUGH NEITHER OF THEM HAS A LOT OF FLIGHT TIME. THEY ARE EXCELLENT PILOTS.
EVEN SO, THEY'RE STILL UNLICENSED SO YOU COULDN'T POSSIBLY TAKE THEM AS CO-PILOTS.
THAT'S FINE... I'LL BE THE PILOT I JUST WANT THEM TO HELP ME CHECK MY PLANE AND CARRY THE LUGGAGE.

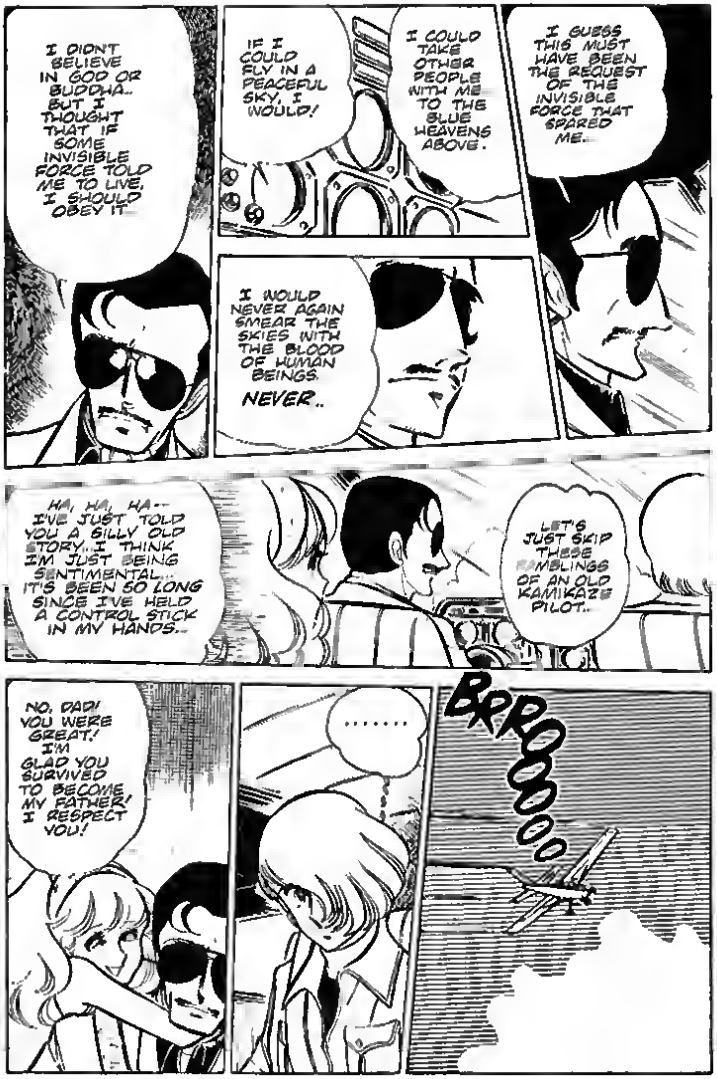
I WANT ONE OF YOU TO COME WITH ME.
AND OF COURSE YOU'LL BE PAID FOR YOUR TIME.
THAT'S GREAT, KANZAKI!
REALLY?
HA, HA-- I'VE SPOILED YOU ROTTEN, RYOKO! OKAY, WHY DON'T YOU BOTH COME WITH US?
DAD...WHY DON'T WE HAVE BOTH OF THEM COME ALONG? I'M SURE THEY CAN TELL US ALL SORTS OF WONDERFUL TALES ABOUT FLYING...
THE MORE, THE MERRIER!
I'M NOT GOING, SHIN. WHY DON'T YOU GO?
MR TSUGUMO, SHIN IS A SKILLED PILOT AND EVEN THOUGH HE'S UNLICENSED HE'S BETTER THAN MOST PILOTS AROUND
SEE YOU LATER! HAVE A GREAT FLIGHT!
KANZAKI! WAIT!
EXCUSE ME-- I'LL BE BACK IN A MOMENT!
OH, I ALREADY HAD YOUR PLANE TAKEN OUT OF THE HANGER
.....
DAD


I'M SORRY.. HE WASN'T HIMSELF... HE'S NOT LIKE THAT, USUALLY..
HA, HA, HA--- HE SEEMS TO BE PRETTY SURE OF HIMSELF
I'M SORRY... I REALLY DIDN'T MEAN TO INSULT HIM..
DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT HE'LL HAVE FORGOTTEN IT ALL BY MORNING...
HE WILL..?
HE'S JUST A LITTLE SHORT-TEMPERED BUT IT PASSES QUICKLY. WE'VE BEEN TOGETHER SINCE CHILDHOOD. BACK IN THE ORPHANAGE
ONE DAY, HE AND I WILL FLY ALL OVER THE WORLD TOGETHER. WE BOTH FOLLOW THE SAME DREAM!
WHEN YOU DO... CAN I FLY WITH YOU?
OH, ARE YOU ALREADY MAKING YOUR RESERVATIONS, DEAR?
OF COURSE! WE'LL WELCOME YOU! YOU'LL BE OUR FIRST PASSENGER!


IT WAS DURING THE WAR THAT I FLEW FROM TOKYO TO OSHIMA ISLAND FOR THE FIRST TIME. I WAS A KAMIKAZE PILOT, WITH A FIVE HUNDRED POUND BOMB STRAPPED TO MY PLANE.
I BEGAN TO CRY, THINKING IT WAS TO BE THE LAST TIME I WOULD EVER SEE MY HOMELAND..
I COULDN'T SEE ANYTHING, BECAUSE MY GOGGLES WERE FOGGED FROM THE TEARS..
BUT I WASN'T CRYING FOR FEAR OF DEATH..
RATHER.. IT WAS THE REALIZATION THAT I WOULD NEVER RETURN TO JAPAN.. I HAD FAILED TO FULLY APPRECIATE IT. AND I WAS FILLED WITH A DESIRE TO SEE HOME AGAIN..
MAYBE IT WAS A PASSIONATE HOMESICKNESS FOR THE LAND OF MY BIRTH... FOR IT WAS THE FIRST AND LAST TIME I CRIED IN THE SKY..
DAD.. THIS IS THE FIRST TIME YOU'VE TOLD ME THIS...
HA, HA, H... YOU'RE RIGHT... I NEVER HAVE...
I DIVED TOWARD THE ENEMY FLEET..
BUT BECAUSE OF A FAULTY BOMB RACK, THE BOMB WAS THROWN CLEAR OF MY PLANE.
KASHAKK
OH, NO!
IT DOESN'T MATTER.. I'LL STILL CRASH INTO THEM!!

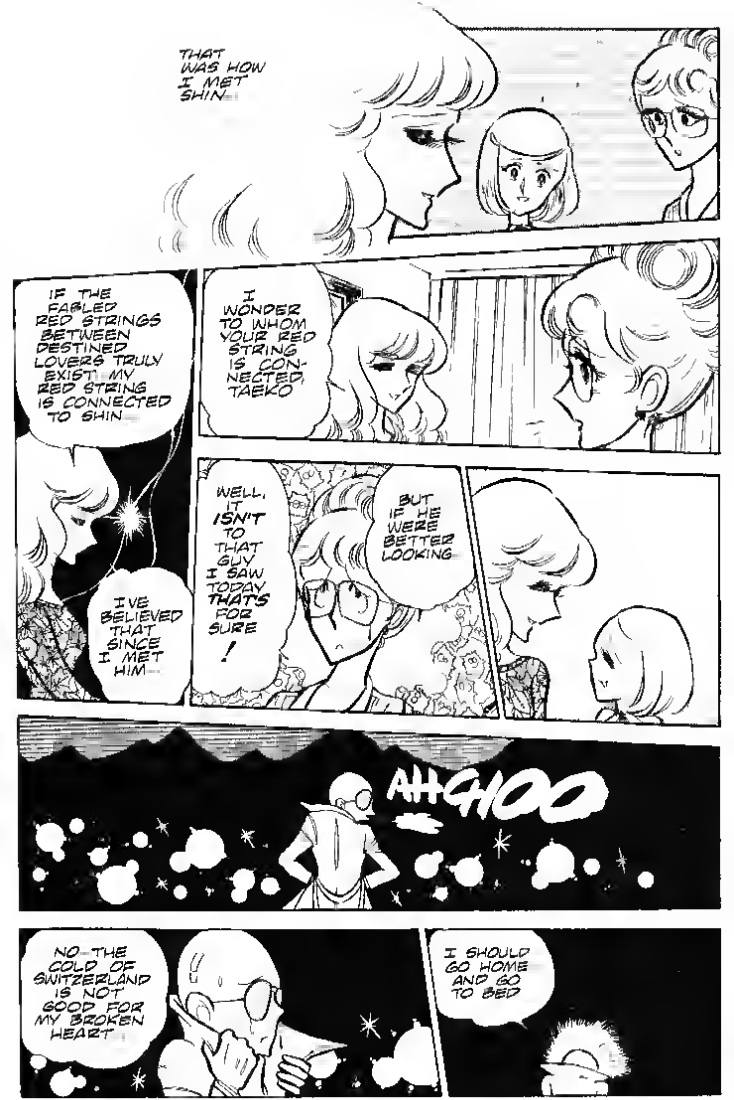

KA-CHOW KA-CHOW KA-CHOW
WAHH!
I REMEMBER THINKING, SO THIS IS MY DEATH. WHAT A USELESS ENDING."
IT ALL TURNED RED BEFORE MY EYES..
THEN WHAT HAPPENED?!
HA, HA, HA-- I WAS SAVED, OF COURSE, OR I WOULDNT BE HERE NOW!
WHEN I CAME TO, I WAS IN THE SICK BAY OF AN ENEMY CARRIER.
LET ME DIE! PLEASE!
IT'S BETTER THAN LIVING IN SHAME!
NO! YOU CAN'T DO THAT!
WHY DO YOU THINK YOUR LIFE WAS SAVED?!

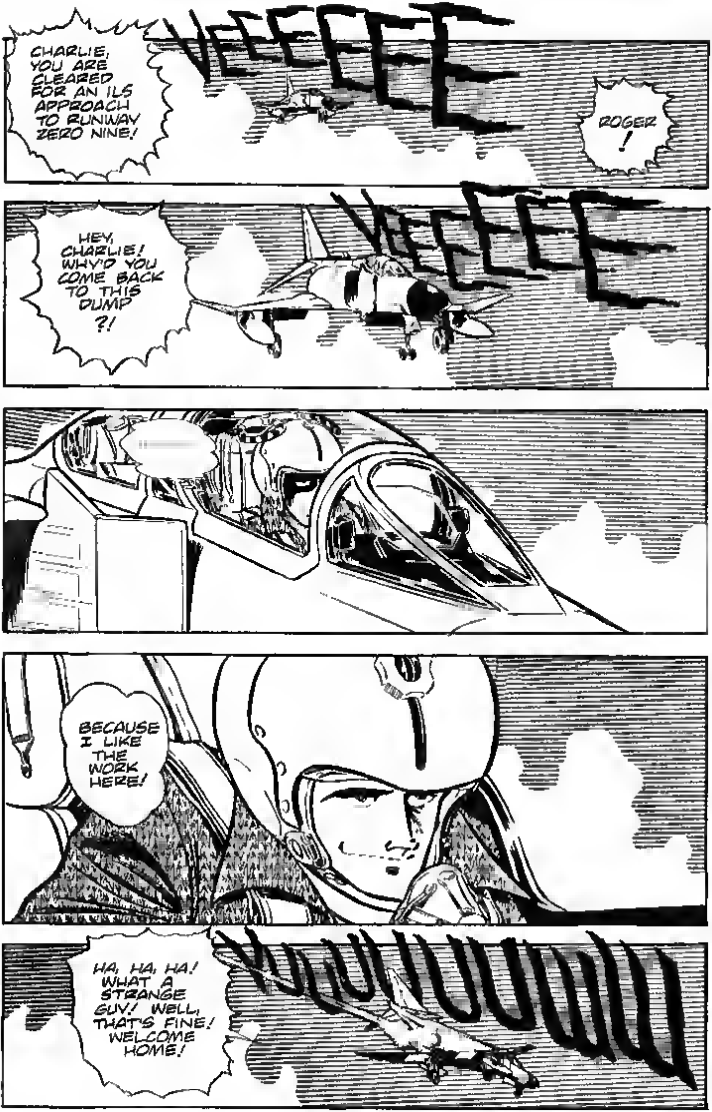
WHY MY LIFE WAS SAVED..?
THESE WORDS SHOCKED ME...
I INTENDED TO DIE...AND THOUGH I HAD THOUGHT ABOUT WHY I SHOULD DIE, I HADN'T THOUGHT OF ANY REASON TO LIVE...
I... I...
YOU MUST LIVE, MY SON! GOD IS NOT CALLING FOR YOUR LIFE YET!
GOD HAS JUDGED THAT YOU STILL HAVE MANY THINGS TO DO IN THIS WORLD! DO YOU UNDERSTAND?
HE SPOKE IN FALTERING JAPANESE. HE SAID HE WAS A PASTOR...
OTHERWISE, SUCH A MIRACLE WOULD NOT HAVE HAPPENED.
MIRACLE ?!
YES! YOUR PLANE WAS COMPLETELY DESTROYED...
..ONLY THE COCKPIT SURVIVED--WITH YOU IN IT... WHAT CAN THAT BE, IF NOT A MIRACLE ?


I DIDNT BELIEVE IN GOD OR BUDDHA.. BUT I THOUGHT THAT IF SOME INVISIBLE FORCE TOLD ME TO LIVE, I SHOULD OBEY IT.
IF I COULD FLY IN A PEACEFUL SKY, I WOULD!
I COULD TAKE OTHER PEOPLE WITH ME TO THE BLUE HEAVENS ABOVE.
I GUESS THIS MUST HAVE BEEN THE REQUEST OF THE INVISIBLE FORCE THAT SPARED ME..
I WOULD NEVER AGAIN SMEAR THE SKIES WITH THE BLOOD OF HUMAN BEINGS.
NEVER..
HA, HA, HA-- I'VE JUST TOLD YOU A SILLY OLD STORY.. I THINK IM JUST BEING SENTIMENTAL... IT'S BEEN SO LONG SINCE IVE HELD A CONTROL STICK IN MY HANDS..
LET'S JUST SKIP THESE RAMBLINGS OF AN OLD KAMIKAZE PILOT..
NO, DAD! YOU WERE GREAT! I'M GLAD YOU SURVIVED TO BECOME MY FATHER! I RESPECT YOU!
.....
BRROOOOO

RYOKO, YOUR FATHER ASKED ME TO TELL YOU TO COME IN NOW...
OKAY... I'M COMING...!
I WAS RECALLING WHAT MY FATHER TOLD US EARLIER...
IT'S IMPORTANT TO LIVE... ISN'T IT...?
YES, IT IS...
I HEARD I WAS ABANDONED IN FRONT OF THE ORPHANAGE DURING THE WINTER...
OH...
A STOCKING WAS WRAPPED AROUND MY NECK...
KANZAKI SAID MY MOTHER MIGHT HAVE BEEN TRYING TO STRANGLE ME...
WHAT A TERRIBLE THING TO SAY!
BUT IF SHE HAD INTENDED TO KILL ME, SHE WOULDN'T HAVE FOLDED IT NEATLY BEFORE WRAPPING IT AROUND MY NECK
YOUR MOTHER MUST HAVE USED IT IN PLACE OF A MUFFLER
I'M SURE THERE WAS A REASON... A REASON WHY SHE COULDN'T RAISE ME... HERSELF

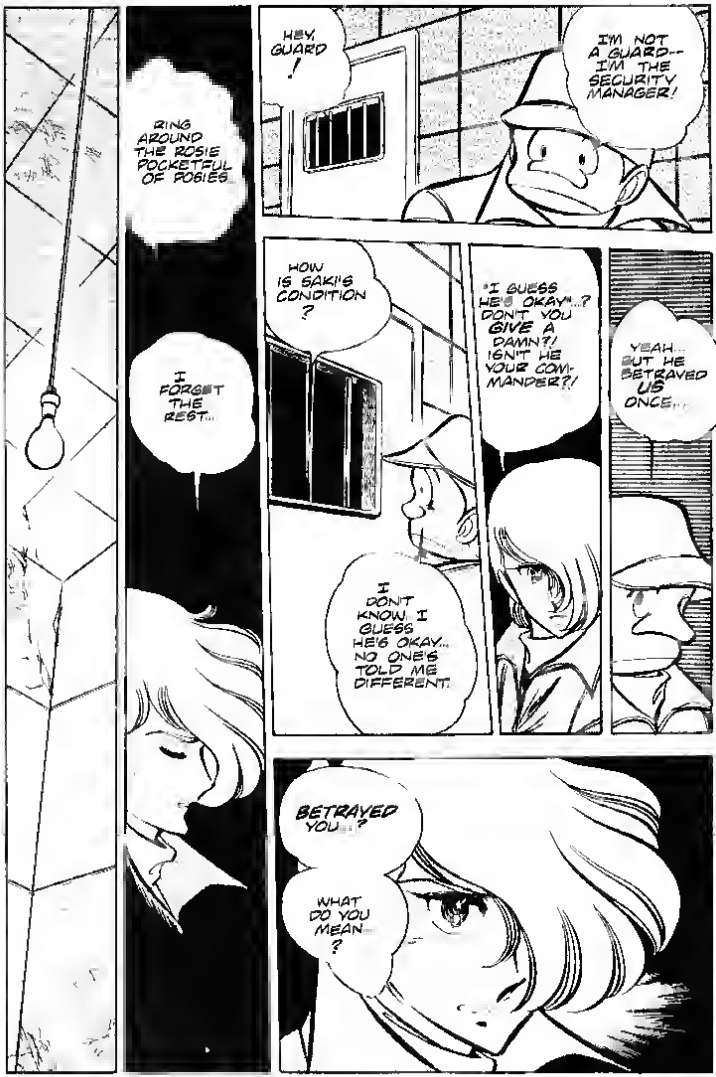
DO YOU RESENT HER LEAVING YOU?
NO, NOT AT ALL.
I APPRECIATE HER FOR GIVING BIRTH TO ME, IF NOTHING ELSE..I HAVE A DREAM AND HOPES FOR THE FUTURE.
AS YOUR FATHER SAID.. "IF SOME INVISIBLE FORCE TOLD ME TO LIVE, I SHOULD OBEY IT"
HEY, RYOKO !
YES, DAD-- I'LL BE THERE IN A SECOND!
MY DAD IS WONDERFUL —AND SO ARE YOU—
GOOD NIGHT, SHIN..
GOOD NIGHT, RYOKO..


THAT WAS HOW I MET SHIN...
I WONDER TO WHOM YOUR RED STRING IS CONNECTED, TAEKO
IF THE FABLED RED STRINGS BETWEEN DESTINED LOVERS TRULY EXIST, MY RED STRING IS CONNECTED TO SHIN...
I'VE BELIEVED THAT SINCE I MET HIM...
WELL, IT ISN'T TO THAT GUY I SAW TODAY, THAT'S FOR SURE!
BUT IF HE WERE BETTER LOOKING...
AH-CHOO
NO, THE COLD OF SWITZERLAND IS NOT GOOD FOR MY BROKEN HEART...
I SHOULD GO HOME AND GO TO BED


CHARLIE, YOU ARE CLEARED FOR AN ILS APPROACH TO RUNWAY ZERO NINE!
VEEEEE
ROGER!
HEY, CHARLIE! WHY'D YOU COME BACK TO THIS DUMP?!
VEEEEE
BECAUSE I LIKE THE WORK HERE!
HA, HA, HA! WHAT A STRANGE GUY! WELL, THAT'S FINE! WELCOME HOME!
VUUUUUUU

SKYHAWK
HEY, IT'S CHARLIE! INVULNERABLE CHARLIE'S COME BACK!
HEY, CHARLIE!
OH, CHARLIE'S COME BACK TO US!
HI, MICK! I SEE YOU'RE STILL ALIVE!
HAH, HAH, HAH-- YOU MUST'VE FELT DEAD OUT THERE IN THE REAL WORLD!
YEAH! IF YOU'VE GOT GUNPOWDER IN YOUR BONES YOU CAN'T SIT STILL OUT THERE
BUT WHEN YOU'RE RISKING YOUR NECK HERE, YOU WISH YOU HAD A NORMAL LIFE.
EXACTLY! GOING OR COMING-- IT'S HELL EITHER WAY YOU TURN!
TOO TRUE
IS SAKI IN THE COMMAND POST?
NO, HE'S IN SICK BAY.

CHARLIE! HAVE YOU COME BACK TO DIE?
...AS LONG AS YOUR SKILL IS AS GOOD AS BEFORE
I KNOW. I KNOW! WE NEED AS MANY PILOTS AS WE CAN GET RIGHT NOW. WELCOME BACK.
WHAT A COMMENT! DON'T YOU KNOW THERE ARE OTHER PLACES I COULD BE RISKING MY LIFE?
SHIN
HEH--DON'T WORRY! I HEAR SHIN IS NUMBER ONE RIGHT NOW BUT WITH ME BACK, WE'LL HAVE TO SETTLE FOR NUMBER TWO.
I HEARD THE STORY FROM MICK IS SHIN STILL IN AN ISOLATED CELL?
YEAH.


HEY, GUARD!
I'M NOT A GUARD-- I'M THE SECURITY MANAGER!
HOW IS SAKI'S CONDITION?
I DON'T KNOW. I GUESS HE'S OKAY... NO ONE'S TOLD ME DIFFERENT.
"I GUESS HE'S OKAY"...? DON'T YOU GIVE A DAMN?! ISN'T HE YOUR COMMANDER?!
YEAH... BUT HE BETRAYED US ONCE...
RING AROUND THE ROSIE POCKETFUL OF POSIES
I FORGET THE REST...
BETRAYED YOU...?
WHAT DO YOU MEAN...?

DEEEP DEEEP
HELLO?
THIS IS JULIANA DO YOU REMEMBER ME?
YEAH, YOU'RE THE BEAUTIFUL SECRETARY MR FARINA'S GOT RIGHT?
WHAT'S UP?
HMMMM MISS YASUDA'S INVESTIGATING ME, EH?
I SEE. I'LL BE CAREFUL
CHAK
WELL, WELL AFTER FINISHING ONE BUSINESS, ANOTHER POPS UP
HMMM RYOKO AND HER ENTOURAGE ARE IN GENEVA NOW
I HAVE TO TAKE CARE OF YASUDA IMMEDIATELY
NO ONE GETS IN MY WAY. NOT EVEN GOD!

TO BE CONTINUED